



Lab shatters records in first year of accelerated shipping effort

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Volume, Number of Shipments Surpass Goals

LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO, October 3, 2012—In the first year of an effort to accelerate shipments of transuranic (TRU) waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), Los Alamos National Laboratory shattered its own record with 59 more shipments than planned, and became one of the largest shippers of this type of nuclear waste in the country. “Our goal this fiscal year was to send 184 shipments to WIPP,” said Lee Bishop, TRU waste manager at the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration Los Alamos Site Office, “and we finished the fiscal year in September with 230 shipments, surpassing Los Alamos’ all-time record by nearly

60 shipments.”Los Alamos’ previous record was 171 shipments, set last year. In an agreement between the New Mexico Environment Department and the Department of Energy, Los Alamos has committed to removing 3,706 cubic meters of TRU waste stored above ground by June 30, 2014. The Laboratory removed 916 cubic meters of waste from its stored inventory this year, more than its goal of 800 cubic meters. It plans to more than double that effort during fiscal year 2013, which begins October 1, with a goal of shipping 1,800 cubic meters by the end of the fiscal year on September 30, 2013. The final 1,106 cubic meters will be shipped by June 30, 2014. “We plan to build on the success of our first year and more than double the amount of waste that we ship in 2013,” said Dan Cox, deputy associate director of environmental programs at Los Alamos. “A lot of people have worked together to make the first year of this effort a success, including the state, the Department of Energy, WIPP and the Laboratory,” said Pete Maggiore, assistant manager for environmental operations at the NNSA Los Alamos Site Office. “We exceeded our goals and are on track to double both volume and shipments this coming year.”

What is transuranic, or TRU, waste?

TRU waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, debris, soil and other items contaminated with radioactive material, mostly plutonium. Transuranic elements such as plutonium have an atomic number greater than uranium, so they are labeled transuranic, for “beyond uranium” on the periodic table of elements. About 90 percent of the current TRU waste inventory is a result of decades of nuclear research and weapons production at the Laboratory. It is often referred to as “legacy” waste.

About the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

The DOE [Waste Isolation Plant facility](#) is designed to safely isolate defense-generated TRU waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP began waste disposal operations in 1999. The facility is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.

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